

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The House Appropriations Committee today approved a funding bill that would devote millions of dollars to ocean research and education programs on the Central Coast. The bill originated in the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science and will now be sent to the full House of Representatives for a vote.

"The Central Coast is home to one of the highest concentrations of ocean research institutions in the world," said Congressman Sam Farr (D-Carmel). "Keeping these schools, labs and education programs on the cutting-edge plays a big part in maintaining our quality of life and has huge effects on our knowledge of oceans."

At the request of Congressman Sam Farr (D-Carmel), who sits on the Appropriations Committee, the bill includes funds for several ocean programs.

The bill sets aside \$2.5 million for the **Bay Watershed Education and Training Program**, known as B-WET. The program, with sites on the Monterey Bay, San Francisco Bay and Santa Barbara Channel, uses the outdoors to teach science, math, reading, social studies and art to help increase academic performance, enthusiasm for learning and ownership of the environment.

The legislation would set aside \$250,000 for the **blue-fin tuna tagging program** conducted by the Monterey Bay Aquarium. Giant blue-fin tuna have suffered catastrophic declines in recent years. New electronic tagging and satellite technologies are revolutionizing oceanographic science and the study of open ocean animal biology. The tags are small computers implanted on or in an animal that record the desired data and at a predetermined time release from the animal, float to the surface, then beam the stored data to satellites which download the data into MBA computers for analysis.

Other key programs in the bill:

- **The bill includes \$50 million to fund the National Marine Sanctuaries Program. These sanctuaries are the marine equivalent of the country's national parks and refuges. The sanctuaries program serves as a trustee and manager for 14 marine sanctuaries. Funds for construction of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Visitor Center**

and Education Facility to be built in Santa Cruz are included in this account.

- The **National Marine Protected Areas Center** would receive \$2.9 million to continue planning, managing and evaluating the nation's system of marine protected areas. These funds are necessary to maintain a minimum level of staffing.

- \$19.5 million were included to fund a critical portion of the **Integrated Ocean Observing System**

Ocean observing systems are operated by various public and private research institutes nationwide to monitor the ocean environment. Integrating them will establish a more comprehensive and powerful system allowing scientists to forecast changes in physical, ecological processes and marine populations.

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